

CHAPTER XVI

RUMANIA. 1938-1946

A. GENERAL

1. During the pre-war period and up to June 1938 Rumania was a constitutional monarchy. However from 1933 to 1938 it was governed by a parliament led by Tatarescu and the Liberal party, although in the latter year, new elections brought into office a government composed of anti-semitic and Iron Guard elements under the leadership of Cuza (Christian Defence League) and Goga (National Christian Party). Within a short time this government was dissolved and a fascist dictatorial government under the leadership of Calinescu (National Renaissance Front) came into power. The real head of the party, however, was the King who made membership compulsory for all servants of the state.

2. Largely due to his attempted suppression of the Iron Guard during the previous year, Calinescu was assassinated in September 1939 and after a brief interval Tatarescu was again returned to power with a government composed of one party only, the National Front. Steps towards a royal dictatorship were taken, and the King's position had been considerably strengthened by early June 1940, when Tatarescu rejected the Anglo-French guarantees and obtained the protection of Germany, allowing a German military mission and troops to enter the country.

3. However Rumanian morale was lowered by the occupation on June 28, 1940, of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by the USSR, and in July, after the Vienna Awards had confirmed the cession of this territory, King Carol (who was criticized for the loss) summoned General Antonescu to form a National Coalition Government. This he succeeded in doing, with the support of a Legionary Movement, on condition that King Carol abdicate. In September of the same year, Michael was proclaimed King, Antonescu "Leader of the state", and Horia Sima, then head of the Iron Guard, Vice-President. On 30 August, 1940, also under the terms of the Vienna Awards, Northern Transylvania was transferred to Hungary, and on 7 September, by the Treaty of Craiova, Southern Dobrudja was ceded to Bulgaria. In January 1941, Sima, supported by members of the Iron Guard, attempted a revolt which failed and he was forced to take refuge in Germany. Iron Guard participation in the government was then succeeded by a military dictatorship.

4. By June 1941, all parties including the two historically democratic groups, the National Peasant Party under the leadership of Julio Maniu, and the Liberal party under the leadership of Georg Bratianu, were prepared to support the declaration of war against the USSR, which was made on 22 June with the direct object of regaining the territories ceded in 1940. Great Britain declared war on Rumania on 6 December, 1941, and on 12 December Rumania, in her turn, declared war on the United States. After initial successes against the Russian army, the Rumanian troops suffered severe losses and were driven back. On 23 August, 1944, Rumania surrendered to the Allies and subsequently declared war on Germany and Hungary, putting her army at the disposal of the Soviet command. By November 1944, the Saratescu government, which had replaced Antonescu, who had been arrested at the time of the Rumanian surrender, was replaced by a government formed by Radescu which included a larger communist element. This

element in the government strengthened its position until in 1946 both Tatarescu, who, in March 1945, had jointly with Groza formed the government imposed by Russian ultimatum, and King Michael withdrew from office.

B. TRANSFERS OF POPULATION

5. Before the war, minorities in Rumania represented 28.1% of the total population, of which the three largest groups were Hungarians, representing 7.9%, Jews 5.7%, and Germans 4.1%. The Hungarian and German minorities were located almost entirely in Transylvania, west of the Carpathians, while the Jewish minority, which represented approximately one sixth of the industrial and half of the commercial population of the country, was scattered throughout the country.

6. After the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, an agreement was made on 5th September, 1940, between Germany and the Soviet for the transfer to Germany of the German minorities, and approximately 137,000 persons, including 12,500 from Czernowitz, left these two provinces. In October of the same year, the Germans made a similar agreement with Rumania for the transfer of approximately 76,700 ethnic Germans from the provinces of Northern Dobruja and Southern Bukovina.

7. The cession of Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria under the terms of the Vienna Award (30 August) and the Treaty of Craiova (9 September) respectively gave rise also to two agreements between Rumania and those countries for the exchange of national minorities.

8. The Rumanian minority in the provinces ceded to Russia which was repatriated to Rumania consisted largely of families settled in those areas since 1919. When, in 1941, Rumania reoccupied the two provinces, they were again resettled there. During the short period of their stay in Rumania 1940-41, the Rumanians from Bessarabia were accommodated in Moldavia and those from Northern Bukovina in Transylvania. In the autumn of 1942, there was again a general transfer to the west of Rumania of those Rumanian nationals living at that time east of the river Bug.

(The Jewish minority is dealt with in the Chapter on Jewish Refugees.)

C. POLITICAL PARTIES

9. Before the war, there existed in Rumania a total of twenty-eight political parties, of which the two most outstanding have been already mentioned, *i.e.* the National Liberal Party, which has been led, since the time of its foundation in 1866, by the Bratianu family, and the National Peasant Party, founded in 1926 by Ion Mihalache as a result of a fusion of two older parties, but as was seen in sub-section A, 2 above, the immediate pre-war period saw in Rumania various combinations of Right-Wing parties tending towards a dictatorial regime.

10. The most powerful pre-war element in Rumanian politics was, however, the Iron Guard (Garda de Fer), originally known as the League of the Archangel Michael, which was founded in 1923, with the Swastika as its emblem, around the person of Corneliu Codreanu, adopting its present name in 1930. Premier Duca fell its victim in December 1933, as did Calinescu in 1939, and from 1933 onwards, the fascist terrorist and pro-Nazi character of the organisation became increasingly patent. Its appeal has been described as being "especially to dispossessed aristocrats, disgruntled young intellectuals and to

numerous souls who ascribed their poverty to the prosperity of the Jews". In 1938, its founder Codreanu was shot and an obscure follower by name of Horia Sima took his place. As previously noted, Antonescu used the Guard to assist in the formation of his government in 1940, but in January of the following year, during the revolt against Antonescu's leadership, the Iron Guard distinguished itself by the worst excesses, directed especially against the Jewish population. The revolt having failed, most of its leaders succeeded in escaping to Germany or Austria, where they enjoyed the protection of the Nazis. After the Rumanian surrender in 1944, Horia Sima and certain of his followers set up a puppet Rumanian government in Germany with the intention of continuing the war at the side of the Germans. Finding itself without any support in Rumania itself, however, this government rapidly disappeared into oblivion.

D. MOBILISATION OF LABOUR

11. *Forced Labour.*

A special characteristic of the labour situation in Rumania during the war years is the fact that very few Rumanians were transferred as forced labourers to Germany. The only known agreement was one made in 1941 for the transfer of 16,000 Rumanian youths as apprentices for training, but it is known that this agreement was not fully implemented, and no more than 4,000 were transferred under it. Rumania did send, however, some so-called volunteers to Germany who belonged to the Hungarian, Slovakian, Ukrainian and Russian minorities.

12. Another group of persons who came to Germany were labourers and workers who were lured by the promise of high wages and the fact that proof of work exempted them from army service in Rumania. The number of such persons who went to Germany is not known.

13. *Youth Labour Service.*

In March 1941, a youth labour service, with leaders trained in Germany, was set up in Rumania, but the labour camps intended to house the conscripts began to function only in April 1942. The period of service required of each person was seven months, and those to whom conscription applied were youths in their 19th and 20th years.

14. *Civil Mobilisation.*

This was authorised by a decree of May 1941, making men and women between the ages of 20 and 57 liable to compulsory employment if not already employed. Subsequent decrees published in 1943 dealt with particular aspects of Rumania's manpower problem, and, in addition, special decrees were passed, permitting the employment of those Jews who were necessary for war production. Jews, who were dismissed from their normal employment, were compulsorily enrolled in the Jewish labour service and generally employed on road work. The Rumanian Jews, were however, exempted from military service.

15. *Waffen S. S.*

Immediately after the entry of Rumania into the war, recruiting began for the Rumanian Waffen S. S. or the Rumanian Legion as it was called. At first it was composed of volunteers but as the war progressed, conscription was increasingly used to swell its ranks. By the beginning of 1944 there were 57,000 persons in these units, the majority of whom were Rumanian Volksdeutsche.

E. ELIGIBILITY STATUS OF THE ABOVE GROUPS

16. Iron Guard (Garda de Fer). All members of this group are *prima facie* outside the mandate of IRO under the relevant terms of paragraph 2 of Part II of the Definitions.

17. Youth Labour Service. No presumption will be made regarding this group since service was compulsory. Leaders should be closely interviewed as to whether or not they volunteered.

18. It must be remembered that persons who went voluntarily to Germany are not excluded from IRO for this reason. If, however, their activities in Germany can be construed as voluntary assistance to the enemy forces in their operations, they must then be regarded as outside the mandate.

19. Non-Volksdeutsche members of the Rumanian Waffen S. S. who volunteered are excluded from IRO assistance under paragraph 2 (b) of Part II of the Constitution. Volksdeutsche members are outside the mandate if they are in Germany or in "suspense" if in countries other than Germany.